



## MEMORANDUM

Date: August 10, 2006

To: Ken Bounds

From: Lana Krisman

Subject: Queen Anne and Magnolia Off-Leash Areas

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### **Background**

The off leash areas program established in 1996 has been very successful in Seattle, and we now have 11 off leash areas around the city. One of the goals of the program established by the City Council in Resolution 29628 is to provide an off leash area in every sector of the city; Queen Anne and Magnolia comprise the only sector that does not now have one.

Based on numerous requests from the Citizens for Off Leash Areas (COLA), Parks staff met with representatives of the Queen Anne Community Council, Magnolia Community Club, and COLA in March of 2006 to identify possible sites for one or two off leash areas. This working committee recommended a number of park sites, five (Magnolia Park, Magnolia Manor, Thorndyke Park, David Rodgers Park, and lower Kinnear Park), underwent further staff evaluation and were presented as possible sites at community meetings in June.

Parks mailed more than 11,000 notices to neighborhoods surrounding the five possible sites. The meetings were well attended with more than 100 people at the Magnolia meeting and 80-100 people at the Queen Anne meeting. Parks staff and a facilitator provided information on the decision making process and on the site selection criteria included in City Council Resolution 29628. Parks staff advised that currently there is no funding to develop off leash areas.

### **Site Selection Factors**

To identify sites, the committee and Parks staff used the criteria included in Resolution 29628 that established the off leash area program. They are:

- Avoid interference with other established uses or department sponsored activities.
- Avoid directly abutting residences.
- Assure availability of close parking.

- Avoid locating near children's play areas.
- Locate where there are minimal impacts upon the total visual character of a park.
- Locate where there is low potential for spillover into areas not designated for off-leash use.
- Avoid sensitive environmental areas such as wildlife habitats and steep slopes.

The following additional factors were considered in the evaluation of each site.

- **Size:** Locations within parks that are smaller than .25 acres in size were not considered. Two of our existing off leash areas are similar in size to the proposed sites in Queen Anne: Regrade Park is .25 acres and Plymouth Pillars is .5 acres.
- **Topography:** Flat sites are preferable because surfacing stays in place and erosion is reduced, so sites with known slide issues or within natural areas of a park were not considered.
- **Parking:** A few sites have parking lots, but the majority of parks have limited on street parking. Sites are intended for use by local residents. Based on experience at other modestly-sized sites, staff believe that smaller OLAs would not require additional parking.

### **Evaluation of Sites**

Using the site selection criteria, Parks staff evaluated a total of five sites in Queen Anne and Magnolia, the sites identified by the working committee.

#### **Scoring:**

Sites within a park were scored against each criterion; the sites with the highest scores were identified as possible sites. Sites with the highest scores included Discovery Park, Smith Cove, Magnolia Manor, Magnolia Park, Thorndyke Park, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. W., and David Rodgers Park. The following scoring system was used:

- 1 – Poor, does not meet criteria
- 3 – Average, meets most of criteria but not all
- 5 – Good, meets criteria

### **Recommended Sites**

The following is a short evaluation of the three recommended sites.

#### **Magnolia Manor Park – 3500 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. W**

- *Total park acres/location:* 5 acres, recommended location is .25 acres near the far fence dividing the park from SPU property.
- *Criteria met/not met:* The site is not immediately adjacent to homes, does not interfere with other uses, and would allow other park users to enjoy other areas of the park.
- *Public opinion:* A few immediate neighbors of the park are concerned about noise and how an off leash area would affect the overall character of the park. The majority who attended the Magnolia community meeting were opposed to off

leash areas in Thorndyke Park, Magnolia Park., or Magnolia Manor, stating that Discovery Park was an appropriate location (total of 48 opposed, 21 support). A few neighbors of these parks supported the idea but the majority of supporters are OLA supporters who do not live in the immediate neighborhoods of these parks.

#### **David Rodgers Park – 2800 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. W**

- *Total park acres/OLA location:* 8.5 acres, recommended location is .25 acres next to the tennis courts.
- *Criteria met/not met:* The site is not adjacent to homes and is a good distance from the play area. It is a very small area, one of the few flat areas in the park. The site located in the center of the park does have potential for spillover into areas not designated for off leash use.
- *Public opinion:* Neighbors are concerned about parking, noise, and continuing problems with off leash dogs in the park if an off leash area is developed in the park. They are also concerned that off leash areas are unattractive and that the program creates “destination” sites. There is support for locating more than one small off leash area in Queen Anne so that sites are not heavily impacted. As with Magnolia Manor Park, there is strong opposition from immediate neighbors to developing an off leash area in David Rodgers Park. Parks received a petition from neighbors in opposition with more than 50 signatures. COLA and the Queen Anne Community Council support this site if it is not the only site on Queen Anne.

#### **Lower Kinnear Park – 899 W Olympic Pl.**

- *Total park acres/OLA location:* 14 acres, recommended location is .5 acres in lower Kinnear adjacent to the tennis courts.
- *Criteria met/not met:* This area is not heavily used and is buffered from neighboring houses. The maintenance road cuts through this area so there are some design issues that can be addressed. Access would be from the W Roy St. east entrance to lower Kinnear or from the upper park to the lower park via the path. Parking is limited on this street. Upper Kinnear is not under consideration because of slide issues.
- *Public opinion:* There are concerns that this is a designated Seattle landmark and an Olmsted park, and that an off leash area would impact the visual character of the park. There is support for identifying a location in lower Kinnear Park. Of those who attended community meeting, 22 supported this site and 10 opposed it. Members of the community and Parks are currently planning restoration of the park to encourage citizens to use the park for positive activities. Parks crews expect to remove non-native vegetation and trim trees for views in lower Kinnear. An off leash area could work into the community’s plan for lower Kinnear. COLA has said that they will support lower Kinnear but this location will not serve upper Queen Anne.

#### **Additional Sites:**

The following additional sites were strongly suggested at the two community meetings. The sites include locations that are not park property or that would require lengthy

planning processes, so they were not among sites included for consideration at the public meetings..

#### **Discovery Park – 3801 W Government Way**

- *Total park acres/OLA location:* 527 acres, a potential location, approx. 2 acres, is near the north parking lot on Bay Terrace Rd.
- *Criteria met/not met:* This area is at the NE boundary of the park, not immediately adjacent to residences, would not displace other users, and has ample parking. This area was not included in the City Council 1986 approval of the Discovery Park Master Plan.
- *Public opinion:* At the Magnolia meeting, there was strong support for forming a coalition to amend the master plan and establish an OLA at Discovery Park. Any effort to revise the master plan would be protracted and contentious.

#### **Smith Cove-Lower Playfield**

- *Total park acres/OLA location:* 4.4 acres, potential location is at the southern and northern perimeter of the playfield.
- *Criteria met/not met:* While this site meets all criteria, this park area was recently acquired and has not undergone a planning process. Staff recommends that this site be considered during the master planning process.
- *Public opinion:* This site is supported by COLA and the Queen Anne Community Council as it is a large site and away from residences.

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. W/W Ewing St. Park**

- *Total acres/location:* .4 acres, potential location is within SDOT street right of way and King County property.
- *Criteria met/not met:* Site is away from residences and in green space with no established uses other than passive use. This area was created to provide shoreline access as a condition of the shoreline permit for the Metro Water Quality Lab. The area is within 15 feet of the Lake Washington Ship Canal.
- *Public opinion:* This site is supported by COLA and the Queen Anne Community Council. Staff recommends that Parks approach King County and SDOT regarding the feasibility of using this site.

#### Attachment

#### Inventory of Park Sites and Evaluation